



## Conservation Report Tells Local Success Stories

**Release Date:** 8/5/14

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MADISON – From northern pike spawning grounds to storing rabbit manure, the work of conservation professionals in Wisconsin is nothing if not diverse, and that diversity is the theme underlying the new edition of Wisconsin's Land and Water Annual Progress Report

*Conservation in Wisconsin: Strength in Differences*, an essay introducing the report, says, "There are no off-the-shelf answers to conservation questions in Wisconsin." The report was presented to the Land and Water Conservation Board at its August 5 meeting and is now available online at <http://datcp.wi.gov/uploads/Environment/pdf/LandWaterAnnualReport2013.pdf>.

Conservation efforts in Wisconsin are a cooperative effort involving the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, county land conservation departments and committees, among others. The report features success stories that focus on projects outside the usual scope of protecting the state's cropland and waters from soil erosion and manure runoff, as well as thumbnail sketches of more traditional conservation projects undertaken to help farmers address on-farm runoff management challenges in **Clark, Eau Claire, Marathon, Manitowoc, Oconto, Pierce, Racine, Shawano and Taylor** counties. It also includes tables tallying the many conservation practices undertaken by the agencies along with county conservation departments and landowners.

Success stories featured in the report:

**Monroe County** – Randy Nierling raises rabbits in a converted dairy barn. He has 5,000 rabbits producing as much manure as 25 dairy cows, and there was a risk of it finding its way to Lemonweir Creek. Nierling worked with the Monroe County Land Conservation Department and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to build manure storage space and develop a nutrient management plan for the manure, reducing odors and protecting the creek.

**Brown and Oconto counties** – A project initiated by the Brown County Land and Water Conservation Department aims to return to the days when the annual northern pike spawning was a spectator sport for people in the Green Bay area. Today, loss of spawning habitat has largely eliminated the annual pike spawning run. The department, together with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Oconto County, are working with landowners, farmers and local contractors to return wetlands connected to Green Bay to their former status as prime spawning habitat. Along the way, many other government agencies and non-profits, including the Green Bay Packers, have joined the effort. This year, monitors counted 30,000 migrating young northern where only 300 were counted previously.

**Chippewa County** – Good water makes good beer, so the Jacob Leinenkugel Brewing Company co-sponsored a five-year pilot project with the Chippewa County Land Conservation Committee to reduce phosphorus in Little Lake Wissota, making the lake good for swimming and fishing once again. Many local businesses and organizations chipped in to augment funding from state and federal agencies.

**Milwaukee County** – The environmental group 1000 Friends of Wisconsin approached the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and the Milwaukee County Environmental Services Unit with a proposal to remove barriers to green infrastructure – public infrastructure that works with nature rather than against it. The upshot of the project was a finding that regulations and engineering codes were among the barriers, so a number of codes and ordinances were changed. Besides the city of Milwaukee, many of its suburbs also adopted the new ordinance language. ###